

Ministry of Health

Guidance for Temporary Foreign Workers

Version 1 – March 31, 2020

This guidance document provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment or legal advice.

Please check the [Ministry of Health \(MOH\) COVID-19](#) website regularly for updates to this document, FAQs, and other information.

Arrival in Ontario

- As announced on March 20, 2020, all temporary foreign workers (TFW) will be able to travel to Canada by air or land. They will be exempt from the air travel restrictions announced on March 16, 2020, as well as border restrictions. Those affected by these exemptions should not try to travel to Canada immediately.
- Like all travelers, including Canadian citizens and permanent residents, TFW's who enter Canada by air or land will undergo the necessary health checks and must isolate for 14 days upon arrival in Canada.
- In addition, a temporary modification is being made to the Labour Market Impact Assessment process for agriculture and food-processing employers, as the required 2-week recruitment period will be waived for the next 6 months.
- The federal government is also increasing the maximum allowable employment duration for workers in the low-wage stream of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) from 1 to 2 years. This will improve flexibility and reduce the administrative burden for employers, including those in food processing.

Transportation

- The TFW sector proposal indicates adequate transportation methods to farms and food businesses. Transportation will be arranged by farms and food businesses that would ensure TFWs remain isolated from the general population while in transit to their housing and worksites. No public transit is required.

Employers have identified means through which they can prevent exposure to existing workers and/or business operators.

At the (Workplace) Farm

- Those who have travelled outside of Canada are required to [self-isolate](#) and not work for a period of 14 days starting from their arrival in Canada.
- During the 14-day period, the employer should supply the TFWs with necessary supplies required to self-isolate (i.e., adequate food, potable water, toiletries etc.).
- TFWs should not attend work if symptoms develop and [isolate](#) within the housing accommodation. Refer to the [Guide for Caregiver, Household members, and Close Contacts](#) for addition information on public health precautions.
- If a TFW is unable to adequately isolate from other housemates, alternate arrangements will need to be made. The local public health unit should be contacted to provide consultative advice on isolation and accommodation for TFWs. Alternative accommodation should be discussed with the employer, consulate representative and in consultation with the local public health unit.
- Everyone in Ontario should practice physical distancing of 2 metres/6 feet to reduce their exposure to other people. Employers should facilitate arrangements to ensure that this is practiced in the workplace to every extent possible. Consider staggering lunch breaks and cancelling any planned events.
- The Ontario Ministry of Health has provided recommendations and tools for both active and passive screening, these are available on the ministry's [COVID-19 website](#). Screening activities should be focused on TFWs and should be done on a regular basis throughout the day.
- It is also advised that each farm or food business notify the local [public health unit](#) of new TFW arrivals and discuss further guidance and/or inspections of foreign worker farm housing, as needed.

Screening

- Employers of TFWs should implement active screening (e.g. asking questions) in addition to passive screening (e.g. signage) measures:

Passive screening ([visitor signage](#)):

- Existing signage should:
 - be clear, visible and able to be read by all;

- warn individuals to not work if experiencing respiratory symptoms;
- encourage individuals to practice hand hygiene; and
- encourage individuals to follow proper respiratory etiquette.

Active screening

- Instruct TFWs to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing ([How to Self-Monitor](#));
- All TFWs and employers are able to use the [Ministry of Health's online COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) if they need help determining whether they should seek further care;
- Consider having a screener at farm to conduct active screening of TFWs and ensure the following conditions are in place:
 - screening tables are located in an area away from others and away from any high traffic areas;
 - there is an appropriate supply of hand sanitizer at the screening table.
- If the screeners are able to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres/6 feet from those being screened, or if they are able to be separated by a physical barrier such as a plexiglass barrier, the screener does not need to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) while screening, otherwise, the appropriate PPE must be worn:
 - surgical/procedure mask;
 - gown;
 - gloves;
 - eye protection (goggles or face shield).
- Consult with local community partners to source PPE, if needed.
- Ensure to protect all personal information in such a manner as to protect personal privacy of employees.
- Symptomatic individuals should be instructed to immediately isolate.
- If COVID-19 is suspected or diagnosed in a TFW or other staff, return to work should be determined in consultation with their employer, health care provider and the local public health unit.

Occupational Health and Safety

- If COVID-19 is suspected or diagnosed for an employee, return to work should be determined using the [Public Health Guidance on Testing and Clearance](#), or in consultation with their health care provider and the local public health unit.

- The staff member must report to Occupational Health and Safety prior to return to work. Detailed general occupational health and safety guidelines for COVID-19 are available on the [MOH COVID-19 website](#).
- Client-contact surfaces (i.e., areas within 2 metres/6 feet of the person who has screened positive) should be disinfected as soon as possible.
- If the employee's illness is determined to be work-related: In accordance with the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and its regulations, an employer must provide a written notice within four days of being advised that a worker has an occupational illness, including an occupationally-acquired infection, or if a claim has been made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) by or on behalf of the worker with respect to an occupational illness, including an occupational infection, to the:
 - Ministry of Labour;
 - Joint health and safety committee (or health and safety representative); and
 - Trade union, if any.
- Any instances of occupationally-acquired infection shall be reported to WSIB within 72 hours of receiving notification of said illness.
- For more information please contact the [Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development](#):
 - Employment Standards Information Centre: Toll-free: 1-800-531-5551
 - Health and Safety Contact Centre: Toll-free: 1-877-202-000

Additional Information

- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
- Frequently touched surfaces are most likely to be contaminated.
- Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
- Check the expiry date of products you use and always follow manufacturer's instructions.
- In addition to routine cleaning, surfaces that have frequent contact with hands should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice per day and when visibly dirty.
- Examples of frequently touched surfaces include doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, counters, hand rails, touch screen surfaces, table tops, chairs, food contact surfaces, meal trays and kitchen and buffet serving utensils.

- Food within foreign worker housing should be protected from contamination at all times. This may include safe distancing or ensuring guards or coverings for food, and utensils.
- Ensure all hand wash sinks are supplied with soap and paper towels or a working hot air dryer.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Please refer to the [Cleaning and Disinfection Information Sheet](#).

Step 1 Cleaners: break down grease and remove organic material from the surface.

- Used separately before using disinfectants.
- Can be purchased with cleaner and disinfectant combined in a single product.

Step 3 Disinfectants: have chemicals that kill most germs. Disinfectants are ideal for frequently touched surfaces.

- Applied after the surfaces have been cleaned.
- Have a drug identification number (DIN).

Disinfectant wipes

- Have combined cleaners and disinfectants in one solution.
- May become dry due to fast drying properties. Should be discarded if they become dry.
- Not recommended for heavily soiled surfaces.

Prepare products for use

- Where possible, use pre-mixed solution.
- Read and follow manufacturer's instructions to:
 - properly prepare solution;
 - allow adequate contact time for disinfectant to kill germs (see product label);
 - wear gloves when handling cleaning products including wipes;
 - wear any other personal protective equipment recommended by the manufacturer.

Coronaviruses

Coronaviruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact, for example, in a household, workplace or healthcare centre. There is no vaccine available to protect against COVID-19.

Symptoms

- Symptoms range from mild to severe, and can include:
 - fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat, and runny nose.
 - Complications from COVID-19 can include serious conditions, like pneumonia or kidney failure, and in some cases, death.
- Monitor symptoms for 14 days after any suspected exposure and:
 - drink plenty of fluids, get rest and sleep as much as possible, and try a humidifier or a hot shower to help with a sore throat or cough.
- The virus is spread through:
 - respiratory droplets;
 - from person to person through coughing, sneezing, close contact; and
 - touching contaminated surfaces.

How to protect yourself and others

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses. Take these everyday steps to reduce exposure to the virus and protect your health:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- avoid contact with people who are sick;
- physical distancing (maintain 2 metres/6 feet distance from anyone coughing or sneezing); and
- stay home if you are sick.

Physical distancing

Everyone in Ontario should be practicing [physical distancing](#) to reduce their exposure to other people.

- Everyone in Ontario should do their best to avoid close contact with people outside of their immediate families. Close contact includes being within two (2) metres/6 feet of another person.

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms, you should begin to self-monitor for a period of 14 days. This means that, in addition to physical distancing, you should track how you feel. You should take your temperature daily and log any other symptoms that develop (for example, sore throat, new cough). You can share these records with your primary care provider over the phone if you seek assessment services.

Definitions

Close contact: a person who provided care for the patient, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or who had similar close physical contact OR who lived with or otherwise had close prolonged contact with a probable or confirmed case while the case was ill.

It is recommended to refer to all credible resources provided by the provincial and federal government.

Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) Q&A

Question 1:

There was a recent announcement that the 3-month waiting period for OHIP coverage to begin has been removed. Does this also apply to TFWs coming into Ontario under the Federal Government's Temporary Foreign Worker Program?

Answer 1:

As of March 19, 2020, the government has temporarily removed the waiting period requirement before OHIP coverage begins. The government removed the three-month waiting period for OHIP coverage in direct response to the COVID-19

situation and the ministry will seek approval for the three-month waiting period to be reinstated when it is advisable to do so.

This applies to all new/returning residents to Canada who are eligible for OHIP coverage upon their arrival to Ontario (including TFWs who meet all other criteria under law).

TFWs need to meet the OHIP eligibility requirements to be enrolled in the plan which include:

- hold a valid work permit or other document issued under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) that permits the person to work in Canada;
- have a formal agreement in place to work full-time for an employer in Ontario
- be working under that agreement; and
- the work permit or other document or agreement must be for no less than six consecutive months.

Question 2:

How do new TFWs obtain an OHIP card through service Ontario?

Answer 2:

A TFW must hold a valid work permit or other document issued under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) that permits the person to work in Canada. The person must also have a formal agreement in place to work full-time for an employer in Ontario and the agreement must be for no less than six consecutive months.

- At this time, and until there is approval for the reinstatement of the three-month waiting period, there is no waiting period for anyone, including new TFWs in Ontario
- Currently, TFWs must apply in person with required documents to support they are entitled to OHIP. Information about document requirements can be found at the following website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/apply-ohip-and-get-health-card>.
- Service Ontario completes OHIP registrations on behalf of the Ministry of Health. Some Service Ontario centres remain open to the public.

- Even if there is a registration delay, OHIP coverage will be backdated accordingly. Please note that the ministry has provided temporary funding for medically necessary physician and hospital services for all uninsured people in Ontario, including those who are currently unable to apply for a health care, who do not have an OHIP card.

Question 3:

COVID-19 screening centres are not asking for OHIP cards but to access the laboratory results an OHIP number is required, will this be waived?

Answer 3:

An individual who does not have an OHIP number cannot access their laboratory results online at this time. There are alternate paths for all users to access their results if they are unable to use the COVID-19 application. Please speak to staff at the testing centre to confirm how to receive test results.

Question 4:

Do employers of TFWs still need private insurance to bridge any gaps?

Answer 4:

The government has removed the three-month waiting period for OHIP coverage in direct response to the COVID-19 situation and expects to seek approval to have the waiting period reinstated when it is advisable to do so.

TFWs must meet all other requirements under law to be considered eligible for OHIP (see answer to Question 1 above).

Please see the following link to identify what OHIP covers: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/what-ohip-covers>. The Ministry of Health cannot comment on what additional insurance these individuals may require while in Ontario.